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ABSTRACT

An advisory committee oversaw and guided an investigation of credentialing adult education instructors in Illinois. At its direction, a series of focus group inquiries were conducted into issues surrounding the development of a system of professional credentialing. Requirements varied widely in 13 states found to have some form of mandatory credentialing process; options were available in most states with credentialing programs. Essential elements were identified. Focus group discussions identified these three major challenges in instituting a credentialing system: ensuring that all adult education systems are learning organizations that engage in meaningful, transfer-centered professional development; providing consistent, accessible opportunities for professional growth; and providing the systems and resources for professional development that meet the needs of the field and produce the improvements in student performance that credentialing is intended to serve. Recommendations included BA/BS degree minimum; required new instructor orientation program; standard requirement of professional development activity; reward for participation in professional development; database for recording professional development compliance; and hold-harmless provision to retain current instructors. Next steps were public input and establishment of an advisory group to develop a plan for gradual institution of credentialing. (YLB)

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Credentialing Adult Educators in Illinois: A White Paper for the Field

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Credentialing Adult Educators in Illinois:

Executive Summary

"Every profession has a system through which its members can hone skills, improve practice, and keep current with changes in knowledge, technology, and the society it serves. . . Opportunities to develop professionally not only benefit the individual in shaping and performing his or her craft but also help ensure that the best practice is everyday practice and that the most effective approaches are used. In fact, the ability of practitioners to engage in ongoing, high-quality professional development is a hallmark of enterprises that are known for high performance and that, not surprisingly, enjoy sustained public confidence."

- National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

The issue of credentialing adult education instructors is not new to Illinois. As it has arisen as an issue repeatedly, the State Director of Adult Education asked that a study be conducted so that a final decision could be made. Additional weight was given to the importance of this study at a state-wide administrators' meeting during the summer of 1998. At that meeting, the Adult Education Advisory Committee designed a Vision Statement for the future of adult education in Illinois. The Vision Statement was emphatic in its estimate of the need for credentialing.

The inclusion of credentialing in the vision statement in state plan, coupled with the mandate to investigate credentialing from the Illinois State Board of Education, provided the impetus for this study. To achieve that end, an advisory committee was established to oversee and guide the process and to provide a forum for critical review of the findings.

At the direction of the committee, a series of focus group inquiries were conducted into issues surrounding the development of a system of professional credentialing. The focus group questions centered on issues of instructor effectiveness, essential competencies and knowledge, forms of professional development considered important to adult educators, and issues of the effects of a credentialing program on the field.

Adoption of Credentialing Standards by Other States

In a sample of state policies regarding credentialing adult educators, thirteen states were found to have some form of mandatory credentialing process. The requirements for credentialing varied widely and there were a number of options available in most of the states that had credentialing programs. The essential elements included the following:

- BA/BS degree minimum
- Other certification
- Staff development requirements: 11 had specific requirements, one allowed locally established requirements. Requirements ranged from specified workshops to university coursework, required attendance at state conferences, and minimum hours of contact in professional development.
- New teacher orientation programs: 11 states require new teacher orientation, 6 of those specified the form of the training.
- Professional development options: Most frequently mentioned were state conferences and regional conferences and workshops, followed by university courses, site-specific workshops, provider groups, local workshops, private providers, summer institutes, technical support from state board, mentoring, distance learning, study groups, professional libraries, and research groups.
- Funding stream: As in Illinois, all states reported both federal and state funds with the exception of Iowa, which utilized only federal funds for adult education.

Focus Groups

Participants in the focus groups represented the full spectrum of adult educators, encompassing community based organizations (CBO's), community colleges, public school and regional office of education personnel at both the staff and administrative level. Also included were Illinois State Board of

Education (ISBE) and Illinois Community Colleges Board (ICCB) staff and Illinois Adult Education Service Center Network personnel. In each group, twelve questions developed by the advisory committee were presented, with approximately five to seven minutes for response to each question. In general, the questions were directed toward issues of:

- the impact on the field of a credentialing requirement
- essential competencies needed by adult education instructors
- essential elements of professional development in a credentialing process

Emerging from the focus group discussions, three major challenges in instituting a credentialing system were identified. First of these is ensuring that all adult education systems are learning organizations that engage in meaningful, on-going, transfer-centered professional development, and second, providing consistent, accessible opportunities for professional growth for those who invest their time and energies in becoming credentialed. The third is to provide the systems and resources for professional development that will meet the needs of the field and produce ultimately, the improvements in student performance that credentialing is intended to serve. If we are serious about improving adult education in Illinois, we need to meet these challenges.

Recommendations.

1. Minimal requirement should be attainment of a Baccalaureate degree with no requirement as to area of study. K-12 certification requirement should be a local option at the program level.
2. A new instructor would be required to complete an orientation program.
3. A standard requirement of professional development activity
4. Professional development activities would be recorded addressing a plan of study, desired outcomes and standards for evaluation of outcomes.
5. Participation in professional development should be rewarded.
6. Provision for recording professional development compliance should be made in the STAIRS database or other dynamic recording system.
7. Development of a credentialing program should be done in stages, with early concentration on the development of professional development options through the service center network and with local programs and practitioners. This process should also involve the professional association for adult educators (IACEA), the publishing establishment for adult education, the university system in the State of Illinois, and professional development practitioners from outside the education arena. **Pilot demonstration and research projects investigating the effectiveness of credentialing activities should be undertaken and carefully evaluated.**
8. A hold-harmless provision would be made to allow all current instructors in adult education to remain in the field. A phase-in of professional development requirements would allow instructors to gradually increase their level of professional development activities.
9. It is further recommended that this paper be disseminated to programs and interested agencies and that public hearings be used to gather further information that might be useful in the design of pilot projects of credentialing activities.

Recommended Next Steps

1. Public input on the white paper.
2. An advisory group shall be established to work, under direction of the Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center, to develop a plan for the gradual institution of credentialing.
3. The Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center staff will contact other states and obtain copies of materials used in New Teacher Orientation and Credentialing programs.

The full text of the White Paper on Credentialing Adult Education Instructors in Illinois can be accessed at the IPDPC Website: http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/ipdpc or by contacting the Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center at (309) 664-5498, Fax: (309) 664-7373.

The Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center is a special project conducted under provisions of section 353 of the Federal Adult Education Act, P.L. 100-297 as amended, and administered through the Adult Education and Literacy Section of the Illinois State Board of Education, Community and Family Partnerships Division. Federal funds provide 100% support.

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Credentialing Adult Educators in Illinois:

A White Paper for the Field

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> "Every profession has a system through which its members can hone skills, improve practice, and keep current with changes in knowledge, technology, and the society it serves. Doctors, lawyers, architects, accountants, and engineers regularly participate in workshops, seek advanced degrees or certification, and serve as or work with mentors. Professionals in most fields routinely network with fellow practitioners, conduct and review research, and talk to experts and colleagues about new trends, thorny issues, and plans for improvement.
>
> These opportunities for professional growth and renewal often take place within the workplace and are integrated into the daily life of the practitioner. Opportunities to develop professionally not only benefit the individual in shaping and performing his or her craft but also help ensure that the best practice is everyday practice and that the most effective approaches are used. In fact, the ability of practitioners to engage in ongoing, high-quality professional development is a hallmark of enterprises that are known for high performance and that, not surprisingly, enjoy sustained public confidence."
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> - National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

The issue of credentialing adult education instructors is not new to Illinois. The idea has been discussed many times over a period of years, with no clear conclusion ever having been reached as to the benefits or the need for credentialing. As it has arisen as an issue repeatedly, the State Director of Adult Education asked that a study be conducted so that a final decision could be made. Additional weight was given to the importance of this study at a state-wide administrators' meeting during the summer of 1998. At that meeting, the Adult Education Advisory Committee designed a Vision Statement for the future of adult education in Illinois. The Vision Statement was emphatic in its estimate of the need for credentialing. The Advisory Committee's comments on the issue of credentialing included the idea that there would be an incremental improvement in instruction and in student performance as a result of on-going staff development that would be an element of the credentialing process. The language of the vision statement also addresses a number of other issues, including the need for individualized plans for staff development, funding for training activities, paid time for staff development for part-time instructors, and the use of

substitute teachers to provide opportunities for instructors to attend professional development activities. There was also a strong expression that there needed to be increased stability in funding and the development of reward systems by way of increased pay and career ladder opportunities for instructors who took an active role in professional development efforts. Finally, there was an expression of a need to include performance funds for programs with exemplary staff development efforts.

The inclusion of credentialing in the vision statement in state plan, coupled with the mandate to investigate credentialing from the Illinois State Board of Education, provided the impetus for this study. The director of the Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center was given the charge of conducting the investigation. To achieve that end, an advisory panel was established to oversee and guide the process and to provide a forum for critical review of the findings.

At the direction of the panel, a series of focus group inquiries were conducted into issues surrounding the development of a system of professional credentialing. The focus group questions centered on issues of instructor effectiveness, essential competencies and knowledge, forms of professional development considered important to adult educators, and issues of the effects of a credentialing program on the field. A summary of the findings of the focus groups appears as appendix B to this paper. In addition, the research associate of the Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center (IPDPC) conducted inquiries of other states, determining what efforts had been made in credentialing in adult education and with what outcomes. A summary of the findings of this inquiry form appendix A of this paper.

It was a decision of the Credentialing Advisory Committee to focus the study primarily on adult basic education and GED at this point. This was a result of an early decision by the committee originally selected and not a reflection of other needs in the field. The comments from the focus groups indicate that there is as much need for this type of process with ESL as there is in ABE/GED, but the impression of the original committee members was that there was not, due to existing standards for ESL programs. There was also a concern that due to the scope and complexity of adult education taken as a whole that it would be difficult to establish any clear and useful standards to guide consideration of credentialing if too many areas were considered at once.

There is no clear, compelling body of research literature that can be used to substantiate that credentialing adult education instructors will, in and of itself, ultimately result in an improvement in either instructor or student performance on any quality dimension. Credentialing is to a very large extent what Kentucky credentialing investigator Marta Brockmeyer deemed "an act of faith." This is a disconcerting notion to many, including the decision-makers in Kentucky, who opted to increase certain requirements for teacher preparation and professional development, but stopped short of formal credentialing. However, none of the states contacted in this study that had instituted credentialing indicated that they were disappointed with the performance outcomes of the process. Elvin Long, former director of adult education in the state of Missouri, stated unequivocally that in that state the performance improvements were both clear and substantial following the introduction of credentialing.

Even opening the debate about credentialing requires the field to address whether this is a healthy direction for adult education. The discussion may be more important than the resolution. Essential to that discussion is the question of what skills one reasonably needs to possess to successfully address the learning needs of the student population served by adult education. Whether ensured by a credentialing process or by locally established policies, if programs are to approximate the sort of on-going success that leads to successful student outcomes, increases in performance dollars, and stable teaching faculty, they will have to address these issues in a comprehensive manner. Increased pressure on programs to connect to the business world and to workforce preparation under the Workforce Investment Act, coupled with the increased requirements for complex thinking and writing skills that will be part of the new edition of the GED test, will necessitate extensive staff development for those programs who wish to rise above the mediocre. The reliance on performance dollars will only grow. Developing a more professional, highly skilled teaching cadre will be essential in any case.

Adoption of Credentialing Standards by Other States

As a starting point for this investigation, other states were contacted through their governing agencies for adult education to determine whether credentialing systems were currently in place and what the range of standards included. In a sample of state policies regarding credentialing adult educators, thirteen states were found to have some form of mandatory credentialing process. The requirements for

credentialing varied widely and there were a number of options available in most of the states that had credentialing programs. The essential elements included the following:

- BA/BS degree minimum (with the sole exception of Alabama which allowed an Associates degree with at least 6 hours of coursework in the subject to be taught)
- Other certification: 10 required K-12 certification, several had specific course requirements or separate adult education certification
- Staff development requirements: 11 had specific requirements, one allowed locally established requirements. Requirements ranged from specified workshops to university coursework, required attendance at state conferences, and minimum hours of contact in professional development.
- New teacher orientation programs: 11 states require new teacher orientation, 6 of those specified the form of the training. The others indicated only general guidelines or local control. One provided for submission of a local professional development plan.
- Professional development options: Most frequently mentioned were state conferences and regional conferences and workshops, followed by university courses, site-specific workshops, provider groups, local workshops, private providers, summer institutes, technical support from state board, mentoring, distance learning, study groups, professional libraries, and research groups.
- Instructor status: with the exception Arkansas and Michigan, programs were staffed by 85 to 95% part-time instructors, which is consistent with the demographics for Illinois.
- Funding stream: As in Illinois, all states reported both federal and state funds with the exception of Iowa, which utilized only federal funds for adult education.

In general, the tendency seems to lean heavily in favor of requiring similar standards for adult education instructors as are applied to instructors in the K-12 system. The BA/BS minimum established by all states for instructors with full-time status is consistent with the standards for public schools and the certification requirement is reflective of the fact that most adult education secondary completion and ESL programs address similar content and learning needs to the K-12 system. There seems to be some consensus in the direction of requiring some form of ongoing professional development to maintain

certification. The forms that professional development can take are widely variable, perhaps reflecting the needs of a largely part-time instructional staff. Several states do specifically mandate professional development through the university system and one specifies that Continuing Education Units (CEU's) must be earned. Most tend to identify only general specifications, such as required hours or the creation of a professional development plan that specifies what actions will be taken. Some states, Connecticut, for example, have very specific requirements and several types of adult education certification. Other states, such as Texas, have a waiver system that allows flexibility in obtaining instructors in areas such as ESL, in which qualified people may be difficult to find in rural districts. There is, however, a high degree of consistency around several basic components, such as degree, some form of certification, required professional development, and new teacher orientation.

It is worth looking at the history of one neighboring state in detail, as an example. In Missouri, the credentialing process was introduced a step at a time, beginning with the requirement of a teaching certificate. The second step was the initiation of a required summer workshop for all instructors. Shortly after the initiation of the summer workshop, the workshop was switched from a single, centrally located workshop to regional workshops. That proved unsatisfactory due to inconsistencies in programming and outcomes. The regional workshop format was retained, but since the review, training teams are being utilized to present all of the workshops. Three teams function simultaneously, each team addressing a single subject area. The teams are hired on contract, with no team of trainers being used more than two years in a row. The team members are hired from out of state to provide a more national view of adult education issues and to include additional perspectives in the training. According to the former state director, none of the regional workshops require an instructor to travel more than one hour from home, allowing instructors to commute to and from the workshops. The schedule of activities is such that it accommodates commuting within the normal workday.

The next step was the initiation of a fifteen-hour beginning teacher workshop. This training is offered on a weekend, once a month, with multiple opportunities during the summer. This training is offered at a central location by the state service center. New teachers must attend this training before they can teach in a classroom by themselves. They are funded for the training to the extent of travel and lodging. No tuition is charged for teachers who have a letter of hire from a program. Those who have not

already been hired, but who wish to have the training, pay their own expenses and one hundred fifty dollars in tuition. It was noted that both aspiring adult educators and private industry trainers make use of this module.

There has been an additional block of training added since the program was initiated. This intermediate, adult education teacher workshop is offered during the summer months. It also is required of all teachers during the second or third year of practice. The difference between the initial orientation program and the intermediate program is that the curriculum in the intermediate has an emphasis that may change from year to year as issues in adult education emerge and become important to the field. The new teacher orientation course tends to be more stable. The curriculum for both courses is designed by a statewide committee composed of adult educators, state board staff, university educators, and program administrators. All of the state-sponsored workshops have been approved for college credit by the state university system.

Mr. Long indicated that for the past six years, since the introduction of this program, there has been a reduction in staff turnover, a ten percent per year increase in student retention, a substantial increase in attendance each year, a ten percent per year increase in the number of people taking the GED test, and an annual increase in the number of people passing the GED test after taking classes. The entire certification program evolved over a fifteen-year period, with relatively dramatic changes in outcomes occurring during the past six years.

Focus Groups

In conducting an investigation of credentialing for adult educators in Illinois, the Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center conducted a series of focus groups. These included sessions at the three Service Center Regional Conferences, an administrator's focus group convened in Springfield, and a final focus group at the Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators' Association State Conference. The questions presented at each of these focus groups, along with the summaries of comments are included in Appendix B of this paper. In this section, principle arguments and points of discussion raised by the participants in the focus groups are presented and discussed.

Participants in the focus groups represented the full spectrum of adult educators, encompassing community based organizations (CBO's), community colleges, public school and regional office of education personnel at both the staff and administrative level. Also included were Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Illinois Community Colleges Board (ICCB) staff and Illinois Adult Education Service Center Network personnel. The focus group sessions were approximately seventy-five minutes in length. In each group, twelve questions developed by the advisory committee were presented, with approximately five to seven minutes for response to each question. A facilitator and a scribe were utilized to record the responses as exactly as possible. The specific questions used in the sessions are listed in the appendices. In general, the questions were directed toward issues of:

- the impact on the field of a credentialing requirement
- essential competencies needed by adult education instructors
- essential elements of professional development in a credentialing process

Impact on the field of a credentialing requirement

1. Credentialing would ultimately provide better instruction and result in better student performance.

It was a point of discussion in several of the focus groups whether the institution of a credentialing requirement would actually result in improvements in instruction and student performance. There is no clear body of research to substantiate this, although the experience cited in the state of Missouri does lend credence to the assumption. There were a number of points of discussion surrounding competencies needed by adult educators as they entered the field that were strongly suggestive of the fact that a program of orientation and on-going professional development as a part of a credentialing process would produce improved student performance over time. The most important of these is the argument that the requirement of professional development activities would tend to keep instructors involved in the field and would encourage them to systematically improve their skills. The discussion of professional development in the focus groups centered on several areas of development that were considered particularly important. Among these, most important were those areas that were concerned with orientation to the field, providing a

foundation or canon of shared knowledge that could be used in common by all adult education instructors, and professional development that offered instructors insights into the challenges faced by their students.

Systematic approaches to orientation, according to responses to the focus group questions, would certainly result in teachers better prepared on entry to address the needs of the populations they are trying to serve, which should result in an increase in initial retention. In most programs initial retention is one of the key aspects of student success. Responses to questions about necessary entry-level competencies for working with adult students elicited a number of comments in support of new teacher orientation programs. Orientation that equips instructors to be sensitive to the fears and needs of the learning population would enable programs to offer conditions of learning more likely to make students feel welcome and comfortable in the learning environment. Secondly, an informed and well-oriented instructional staff would be better equipped to address student needs within the partnership network of service agencies, thus more effectively addressing students' non-learning concerns that affect retention issues. Providing instructors with information about strategies that have proven successful in adult education contexts would enable novices to avoid many of the errors of trying to teach adults using practices more appropriate to the traditional K-12 system. This awareness of adult education processes and strategies would make newcomers to the field more immediately successful with their students. The strongest support for orientation came from a comment at the Southern conference, from a participant who said that, "A formal new teacher orientation program for all new hires would be an excellent foundation."

This is consistent with the experience in the state of Missouri, cited above. In an interview with Elvin Long, former state director of adult education in that state, he emphasized how essential it is for new teachers coming into adult education to be cognizant of the differences between adult education and the K-12 system. He also commented that new teachers need to be aware of adult education theory, experiential and participatory learning, and the rich life experiences that adult education students bring to the learning environment. In discussing the results of the focus groups, he emphasized that the focus group responses were absolutely consistent with Missouri's mandating a fifteen-hour orientation for all adult education instructors and administrators.

On-going professional development would tend to keep both instructors and programs involved with changes within the field and abreast of the needs of the learning population. Several comments

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focused on the need to adapt to the needs of changing populations and for involvement in on-going professional development activities. There was also a sense that to engage students in life-long learning, it was necessary for teachers to be life-long learners themselves. As one participant at the Central conference focus group noted, "Adult educators should continue to be teacher and learner. . . They must be life-long learners."

Finally, in a recent policy update from the National Institute for Literacy, specific mention was made of credentialing of teachers in adult education as a means of improving quality of instruction. The same article goes on to cite the need for regular professional development opportunities for both teachers and volunteers as further means for improving teaching quality.

2. Credentialing would provide a better image of the field.

One of the consistent observations across the various focus groups was that the institution of credentialing, whatever it's impact on instruction, would tend to have a positive impact on the public perception of the field. Some commentators felt that this would be especially true with regard to funding agencies. Credentialing of instructors implies a degree of professional behavior and commitment that is suggestive of increased accountability. Credentialing would also increase credibility within institutions and agencies, and in general, "will create respect for the profession."

3. Credentialing would limit the instructor pool:

One of the often repeated concerns about the institution of a credentialing requirement is that it has the potential of driving people out of the field. The argument is based on the notion that, particularly in the case of part-time instructors, there is little interest in investing heavily in professional development activities which are first, unremunerated, and second, unlikely to result in promotion or enhanced opportunity for advancement. Additionally, the requirement for additional credentials beyond those required for the K-12 system might well be regarded as redundant and unnecessary. This was viewed as a potential barrier to entry for those already certified in K-12. For those not certified in K-12, the imposition of credentialing requirements were considered by some commentators to represent a disincentive to try adult education as a field of practice. The combined effect of this, expressed again by multiple

commentators, would be to limit the instructor pool and have the potential to inflict significant damage on programs with limited personnel resources. Whether a credentialing requirement would represent an increased cost that would drive people out of the field is an open question, but an important one.

One of the considerations here is whether the loss to the field would be so extensive as to effectively cripple programs in the short term. There were some in the focus groups who argued that it could. However, there is no body of evidence or experience with regard to this issue, which makes it an open question. Marta Brockmeyer, in her presentation on the experience in the Kentucky credentialing investigation suggested that while credentialing might drive out some practitioners from the field, those who remained would be of higher caliber and better equipped to meet the demands of practice. It is also suggested by some that lower standards of credentialing for adult educators might be useful for maintaining the instructor pool. Brockmeyer dismissed this as a reasonable solution. As she put it, "I would not want a brain surgeon who was qualified at a lower standard just because he or she happened to work part time." Given the high level of need of the majority of adult education students, this is an important consideration. Standards for certification or credentialing would need to be sufficiently rigorous to ensure that instructors who were credentialed possessed the identified essential skills for entry into the field and developed the skills they needed to provide effective instruction over time. Mr. Long, commenting on the Missouri experience, noted that in that state, the people who accepted credentialing as a requirement for entry into the field tended to be more committed and of higher quality.

A possible counter-argument to this one that was raised in the focus groups is the likelihood that credentialing could reduce turnover and create a more stable professional base for the field. To the extent that credentialing becomes a vehicle for providing access to more career track and full-time positions, the stability of the field could be greatly enhanced.

The issue of turnover forced by credentialing is one that also could be substantially mitigated by the inclusion in the credentialing plan of a grandfathering clause that allows all those presently working in the field an initial exemption from credentialing. There could also be the use of a phase-in process for credentialing requirements, both of which ideas were raised in focus groups. The phase-in process could be on a time-table proposed at the outset and adjusted in the RFP's as the system for delivery of credentialing activities is developed and put in operation. This would allow the adult education system to move toward

the goal of credentialing in a systematic manner without being hobbled by requirements that exceeded the capacities of the system to respond.

4. Credentialing would create pressure to increase pay, would lead to unionization, etc.

There are a number of administrative issues surrounding credentialing that need to be considered. These were raised by various parties at the focus groups as concerns that had a potential to negatively impact the field should a credentialing program be instituted. Specific issues that were raised included the potential for a teacher shortage should credentialing impact the available instructor pool as discussed above. This loss of "instructional assets" (teachers) could result from the fact that not all people want a full-time job and that many part-time teachers might not wish to meet requirements of credentialing. Also raised was the possibility that there would be pressure to increase salaries if credentialing were required, with resulting increases in operations costs to programs. Another commentator noted that there would be increased record-keeping requirements. Finally, there was a potential for conflict with union shops.

A counterargument to these potentially negative outcomes is a comment from the Northern conference that instituting credentialing would "get some dead wood out of the field." It was also argued that the pressure to increase pay, cited as a negative on the one hand, would have also several positive outcomes, with regard to improved income for credentialed instructors and in terms of professional validation for the field. It was also asserted that credentialing would lead to the creation of a more informed, knowledgeable teaching force. "If done well, credentialing will boost the level of professionalism." It would also create validation for professional development.

5. Credentialing, once established, will be with us forever.

This issue was raised as a significant point at the Southern conference focus group. A participant very specifically argued that instituting a system of credentialing, what ever it looked like in finished form needed to be very carefully crafted as once it had been instituted, it would be very difficult to back away from it. Several other commentators spoke to the issue of design of a credentialing system, noting that the impact on the field is unknown until the full design of the system is complete. Another went on to note that stringent requirements could have a negative impact on the field. During the discussion at the

administrators' focus group it was agreed that the fact that some system of credentialing might be created does not mean that the details are set in stone. The application of reasonable initial standards, coupled with a due regard for the necessary systems for implementation, should be sufficient to allow a phase-in of credentialing that will result in a workable system being set up. Any approach to credentialing will have to be thoroughly debated and accepted by the field before it can be installed. Otherwise, it may simply be a set of rules more honored in the breach than the observance.

6. It is seen as an unnecessary requirement.

This, at some level, may be the single most powerful and cogent argument against the institution of any sort of credentialing system. The field, taken as a whole, doesn't seem to care very much about credentialing, per se. Although no formal survey has been conducted, the feedback in focus group discussions was that most program administrators, college presidents, and instructors have no real interest in credentialing. It simply does not seem to be a priority. This sentiment emerged at the focus groups in the form of the question of whether or not credentialing would in fact have an effect on learner outcomes. It is important to note, however, that the people who do not seem to be interested in credentialing do overwhelmingly seem to be interested in the staff development issues that surround credentialing. This is not peculiar to adult education. In the report Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning (NFIE, 1996), it was reported that while 73 percent of teachers surveyed engaged in professional growth to improve student achievement and 55% did so to improve teaching skills, only 5% did so primarily for the purpose of maintaining professional certification.

On the other hand, a 1999 study from Columbia University, published in the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, indicated that fifty percent of the respondents to a survey of the field indicated that they supported a state credential for adult educators. An additional 43% leaned in favor of such a credential and only seven percent were opposed to credentialing. Concerns were expressed about the problems of credentialing in a field that is predominately part-time and about funding issues in adult education as the major problem facing the field. The survey also indicated that respondents did not see academic training as a necessary requirement for credentialing.

Among the priority areas identified in the focus groups for this study are such things as improved student performance, increased instructor pay, higher levels of professionalism, more consistent and adequate program funding, and so on. There are expressed needs with regard to new teacher orientation and professional development for program improvement, but these are ancillary to a credentialing system, which, while it might mandate some of those things, would not be necessary for those things to exist. In a proverbial horse before the cart scenario, credentialing is quite clearly the cart and the systems' needs emphatically the horse. This is again consistent with the Missouri case, in which the elements of credentialing were installed a piece at a time and evaluated for effectiveness. This is important to remember, not only in order of precedence, but in terms of appropriate design. If credentialing is to be effective, appropriate professional development activities and systems need to be in place before the requirement of a credential. Many of those who are not interested in credentialing are very interested in creating an adult education system in which credentialing would make sense.

Essential Competencies for Adult Education Instructors

In determining a plan for credentialing, it was necessary to consider what competencies and characteristics reflected the qualities of a good adult education instructor and what characteristics were inconsistent with quality instruction in an adult education context.

The area of competencies was perhaps the most thoroughly examined segment of the focus groups. A number of the competencies addressed by the focus groups were so-called soft skills, such as flexibility, adaptability, and the willingness to see someone else's viewpoint. These skills can be successfully trained, although in general, most employers would rather hire them than train them. This is as true of adult education programs as of businesses. However, whether provided by orientation and training or required before entry into the field, possession of the identified competencies would ensure that adult education instructors are prepared for the situations they will encounter in dealing with adult education clients.

There was a high degree of consensus across all of the focus groups on the fundamental characteristics of a quality adult education instructor. Among the most essential criterion were caring, compassionate, flexible, and possessing "a willingness and ability to adapt for their students." Other

consensus points included knowledge of students and subject areas, knowledge of teaching techniques and diverse methods to deliver instruction, creativity and an orientation toward innovation. A good adult education instructor also creates a student centered classroom and has a personal connection with students. One participant put it this way, "Teacher reevaluates curriculum, their teaching style, and classroom assessment practices on a regular basis." A final comment was that a good adult education teacher has "a heart for the students."

There was also a high degree of agreement that the instructor who was rigid and authoritarian, closed-minded, assumed that one teaching method worked for all students, and did not know his or her subject matter would not be an effective adult education instructor. An instructor who came to the classroom with negative preconceptions about the students was also deemed unlikely to succeed in an adult education context. Further, it was considered important to recognize that if an instructor was unaware of and disconnected from the community and it's resources, students would not be well served. An instructor who was rule-bound and who created a teacher-centered classroom, or who was unable to cope with change, such as younger populations in adult education, was also considered an unlikely candidate for success. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, an instructor who lacked the ability to adapt what he or she teaches to meet the needs of the learners was considered to be unfit for the adult education classroom. Both Elvin Long of Missouri and Marta Brockmeyer of Kentucky addressed these same issues in discussions of the process of developing credentialing curriculum and professional development programs in each of their states.

Moving beyond the discussion of what made a teacher effective, other focus questions explored what competencies and understandings were necessary for success as an adult education instructor. The responses to these questions moved somewhat beyond broad generalizations and began to identify specific areas of knowledge and prior experience needed by teachers. Interestingly enough, some of the expected responses, such as high levels of expertise in subject areas, while raised as important, were not emphasized as much as other areas. What did emerge as highly important factors was an understanding of the population, including understanding that the students were not kids. A piece of this in terms of prior training or orientation is that teachers need to have knowledge of strategies that work with adult populations. This ties to other comments that teachers have a rich understanding of teaching methods, have

training and experience in multi-level classrooms, and that they know and understand adult learning theories. An issue that came up at each focus group was that "teachers should understand and use varied teaching styles to accommodate diverse learner needs." The issue of addressing learning differences and teaching styles became a centerpiece of the prerequisite knowledge discussion during all focus groups.

A number of transactional or attitudinal factors were identified as being essential elements of adult education instruction and instructor competencies. Among these were patience, respect, ability to create adult to adult rapport, caring attitude toward learners, and assertive communication skills. Active listening skills were also specifically cited as being part of this core of knowledge as well. At the level of specific subject preparation, reading and mathematics training were mentioned as essential areas.

More specific competency areas were also identified, such as awareness of individual psychology, ability to work with special needs and learning disabled students, and a special understanding of dysfunctional students. In addition to these areas, classroom management techniques, retention techniques, a variety of assessment techniques, and a basic understanding of all academic areas were considered to be among the essential core of skills. As one participant put it, "They should know basic foundations of how they will provide instruction with an eye to experiential learning." Another added, "They should understand the students' world and the world that they are preparing them for."

Continuing a discussion of baseline skills needed as opposed to entry skills, some additional specific areas of competency were identified that tied to more traditional subject areas. In this regard, English language skills and background training were strongly identified at several of the focus groups. Also, one participant reflected that, "experience in another language can promote understanding of their adult students." That led into an additional discussion of background needed by adult educators. Among the specifics identified were that an adult educator needed to be well-read and have a love of knowledge. At another point in one of the focus groups, additional support was given to the study of foreign languages in a somewhat different context. In this discussion of the value of formal education, the study of foreign languages was cited as being particularly important for providing an awareness of how students feel in an educational context in which they are uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the subject area. Another participant in that same discussion noted that the study of Shakespearean English provided her with much the same context for understanding her students' needs.

Other baseline skill areas included technology training and background and a knowledge of program operations, funding, and record-keeping.

Essential elements of professional development in a credentialing process

Professional development on an on-going basis is one of the critical pieces of a credentialing plan, in every conception that has been considered. This was underscored by a statement out of the administrator's focus group in which it was noted that the critical issue in professional development was that it be "continuous professional development, self-directed, as part of an individual plan." In considering the esential elements of professional development that might contribute to a credentialing system, several questions were asked about the value of formal education (i.e., university courses), as well as other forms of professional development. Participants were asked to speak to the importance of these different types of professional development in terms of their relevance to the participant's own practice and to their utility to the field as a whole.

Formal Education

The first point of agreement with regard to professional requirements for the field was that programs presently require at least a bachelor's degree for instructors. This was the consistent response to the question, "What do your programs currently require for hiring instructors?" Additionally, some programs, in particular school district and ROE programs, also required K-12 certification and some programs indicated that they preferred or required master's degrees for full time instructors. These responses were consistent with responses to the same question in a program survey and to interview questions with both instructors and administrators in Leinicke's 1997 study.

With regard to formal education as a contributor to professional development for adult education instructors, responses were widely divergent, with participants sometimes citing the same sorts of courses as both very good and "totally useless". In general, there seemed to be some agreement around the idea that much of what now constitutes teacher preparation in the university system is not geared toward the needs of adult educators. The lack of courses in that area limited to some extent the utility of the university

offerings, according to the focus group participants. The need for relevant coursework was clearly cited, both in terms of university courses and in other forms of professional development.

Other comments with regard to university training touched on a number of issues, including the need for university courses and degrees as a means to legitimizing the profession (although another commentator noted that, "a university degree does not make a teacher"). Liberal Arts degrees were cited as offering a solid foundation for adult educators, and it was noted as well that adult educators are generalists and could benefit from many degree programs. An additional comment in this line was that formal education in whatever form broadens the knowledge base. As one instructor put it, "The whole experience supported my life-long learning philosophy so necessary in adult education."

As far as specific course content or subject areas that participants noted as having been particularly relevant to their adult education practice, educational methods courses were cited most frequently with assessment and evaluation courses following close behind. The experience of student teaching was also brought up at several of the focus group sessions as having been one of the most useful pieces of formal education. Of equal weight in terms of number of responses were courses in psychology and counseling. Other areas mentioned were organizational skills, leadership training, speech therapy, study of foreign languages, reading methods, curriculum based instruction, and philosophy of education.

On the other side of the formal education picture, there was a great deal of agreement across the focus groups that much of the coursework in educational foundations, philosophy of education, and educational theory, including certification courses, was largely irrelevant and not applicable to adult education practice. It is important to note that this became a major piece of the discussion at three of the four focus groups. One respondent went so far as to say, "My theory classes were outdated and not relevant", with another summarizing, "empty facts, not connected, disassociated information." Another commented, "Three fourths of my education classes were a waste of time." A final comment on this is that few adult education courses exist at present, a topic of extensive discussion in the focus groups. It was noted that most university materials had to be adapted to fit adult education. As one participant put it, "I've only had one university class that was specific to adult education."

Another important consideration with regard to university coursework in the area of adult education has to do with the extent to which there is either interest in or incentive for part-time instructors

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to attend university courses or pursue degrees. One focus group participant addressed this issue very directly saying in response to the question about the value of formal university courses, "This is a difficult issue because of the part-time nature of adult education. What are the incentives?"

In-Service Training

At each of the focus groups there was quite a bit of discussion centered on issues of professional development that would be important as part of a credentialing system. There was general agreement that any form of credentialing would entail some degree of professional development as part of the process. With that in mind, the discussions focused on what were the critical delivery systems for professional development as seen by the focus group participants and what were the major themes for professional development activities.

The two most frequently mentioned formats for professional development were conferences and site visits. In the former case, the responses may have been to some extent stimulated by the fact that three of the four focus groups were held at regional conferences. However, several respondents indicated the importance of national exposure beyond the local level, which may also be construed as support for attendance at national conferences and events. The latter case, site visits, were well supported by specific examples such as teacher exchanges, peer mentoring, program visits, and classroom observations. This seems to reflect an interest in direct exchange of information between practitioners. The institute, or extended workshop was viewed by several respondents as being extremely effective. A number of responses focused on the use of computer assisted technologies and distance learning to create access to professional development. Included in these responses were references to internet chat-rooms, cd's, video-conferencing, and virtual teaching and learning communities.

There were several other dimensions of professional development that were considered important by the focus group participants. Participants were careful to note that both internal and external expertise needed to be brought into play in professional development events. It was also commented that professional development needed to be proactive, rather than reactive. Finally, one participant summed up by saying that professional development needed to be built upon a "broad-based understanding of adult education, not just classroom strategies."

Some professional development might need to be centered within the programs, in order to reach those instructors who are unable to attend programs at a distance. This is an issue addressed at three of the four focus groups in which the discussion involved the need for distance learning and local opportunities for learning. This addresses one of the arguments advanced in opposition to required professional development, which is that part-time instructors are sometimes reluctant to engage in professional development activities. At the various focus groups mention was consistently made of the need for professional development that could be easily made available at the local level and that was accessible to all instructors regardless of their work schedules and time constraints. These concerns are well-supported in the literature. A 1996 publication of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) discusses each of the need for centering professional development in the schools, the problem of time constraints relative to professional development and the need to keep instructors engaged in on-going professional development (NFIE, 1996).

At one of the focus groups, local learning opportunities were also heavily cited, but were focused more on face to face opportunities for teachers to learn from each other through site visits, involvement in the professional association, and the opportunity to meet with peers and interact. This supports the social nature of adult education and development of the field through local learning communities.

Discussion

The focus group data presented above provide a foundation for developing a plan for instituting credentialing for Illinois adult educators. In considering the architecture of such a plan, there are two areas that are of paramount importance for the success of a credentialing system. First, it is necessary to consider how the implementation of a plan will proceed, giving consideration to the concerns related to the impact on the field, so that the positive impacts will be emphasized and reinforced and the negative impacts will be minimized or overcome. Included in this is a concern for the measurement of progress and evaluation of the results of each step in the process so that the end result of credentialing is not an empty requirement, but rather the real improvement of performance of adult education practitioners, resulting in increased success for programs and students in the areas of retention of both faculty and students, improved instructional methods appropriate to adult education environments, greater satisfaction and involvement of faculty, and

increased student performance in literacy improvement, GED success rates, and workforce preparation. The second aspect is to consider what variables are essential to producing the desired results in terms of designing a consistent, comprehensive delivery system for professional development that meets the needs of the field. In this section, the data from the focus groups, along with information gathered from additional sources during this investigation will be used as a basis for consideration of these issues.

Meaningful professional development is based on the identified needs of the practitioner and is woven into a web of practice. Just as a pianist moves in and out from practice to performance, honing specific skills in response to the demands of the piece to be performed, professional development activities should be on-going and responsive to changing demands of practice. No one learns enough in the performance setting (in this case, the classroom) to develop skills effectively in that setting. The development of skills is a different thing entirely from the use of skills. Development requires instruction, reflection, practice, feedback, more practice, and then performance. The process cycles iteratively until the skill is acquired. One of the keys to a credentialing program for adult educators is to stimulate this process and build it into the system. At present, there is no pressure in favor of requiring practitioners to improve their skills. Indeed, there are pressures in most programs against practitioners engaging in this process especially in programs in which the typical teacher is employed full time in another capacity and only part-time in the adult education context. Likewise, a program in which the typical teaching assignment involves only a minimal number of hours per week provides little incentive for instructors to improve their skills in a systematic way. The energy expended in doing so is too much greater than the potential rewards justify. Credentialing has the potential to balance the equation if professional development requirements are tied to performance money in such a way as to make it worthwhile for programs to encourage and support professional development activities or to require that instructors devote a minimal amount of effort to professional development activities. Programs need, however, to think in terms of finding structural ways to encourage professional development on the part of their staff, also. Punishing consequences, i.e., losing one's job if one does not engage in professional development, are not likely to engender the desired results. That is, people are more likely to engage in minimal, symbolic professional development activities rather than in meaningful development under such circumstances.

There need to be incentives and opportunities for those instructors who engage in professional development activities as well as for programs whose staffs achieve a high level of participation. The argument that instructors ought to want to improve their skills as a matter of professionalism loses force in a setting in which the level of professional opportunity is so low as to be non-existent. This was supported by comments from the focus groups that raised questions about improving opportunities for full-time positions in the field and questioned the incentives for professional development. As Robert Mager (Mager and Pipe, 1984) has pointed out, if there are no rewarding consequences for behavior, there is little likelihood of people engaging in that behavior. This is one of the most fundamental principles of psychology.

There have to be rewards in the system. For most dedicated teachers, the rewards that matter are those that allow them to work in their chosen field and make a reasonable living at it. Research in motivation has established that money, in and of itself is not a motivator. However, it has been identified as a satisfier. It will not make people want to work harder, but the absence of it will make people dissatisfied with their position and they will be more likely to change jobs and leave. Rewards in the way of increased pay, more hours in the work assignment, opportunity to advance to full-time positions; all of these would be outcomes that would provide incentives for part-time instructors to engage in meaningful professional development activities.

There is a counter-argument that people who work part-time do so because they don't want the burden of professional responsibility and time commitments that go with full-time work. This may be true for some segment of the instructor population. Certainly many of those who work part-time do so by choice. Some are highly dedicated, some just have a job. The central question here is, will people whose attitude is that they do not want to invest in professional growth achieve what is desired, indeed, demanded that adult education instructors achieve? It is an important question. The new Workforce Investment Act and the GED 2000 both place increased demands on adult educators. Significant learning and development will have to take place for instructors to meet those demands. Elvin Long, discussing the Missouri experience, commented that credentialing resulted in the retention of more motivated and committed instructors. Might not the field be better served by fewer people with higher commitment?

Beyond the concerns about instructor commitment is a concern with regard to the extent to which host systems consider adult education as part of their core mission and are therefore willing to make the necessary investments in adult education programs. Requiring credentials for adult basic education and GED instructors will necessitate a greater investment by the programs in their staff. The burden of credentialing will not rest entirely on the instructors. There are several issues involved here. First, with regard to consideration of adult education as a core mission of the larger organization in which the program exists: adult education programs have existed at the fringes of larger organizations for most of their history. There has been a certain freedom of action associated with that that has allowed adult education to perform as a non-traditional, open-ended educational process. With increased demands for accountability and the emphasis on performance as a basis for funding, some of this freedom is being lost and programs are being pushed into a more defined service delivery. In order to meet these demands (workforce preparation, for example), the mission of adult education needs to be reconsidered. This also then requires a reexamination of the intra-systems relationships that support the adult education program. Institutions invest most heavily in their core mission. If that mission is to be a primary provider of workplace skills, then adult education programs that prepare people for the workplace are synchronous with the core mission. The organization should therefore be willing to invest in the adult education program as supporting the attainment of major organizational goals. If the core mission of the organization is to provide an opportunity for K-12 completion, as it is in many adult education programs, with workplace preparation seen as an adjunct, the resulting disjunction of goals will tend to reduce organizational support for credentialing activities in the workplace preparation area. In the former case, the institution should be willing to allow for the costs of credentialing instructors as an investment in program quality to the extent that credentialing activities better prepare instructors to do workplace education. In the latter case, credentialing beyond that needed for the K-12 system would likely be regarded as an added expense. How willing programs will be to make investment in professional development in the absence of mandated set-asides is an open question that will have considerable impact on the success of any credentialing effort.

A secondary issue is the degree to which programs are willing to disassociate themselves from "one size fits all" training models for professional development. Effective professional development for credentialing would need to be more individualized and related to the identified needs of each instructor.

This individualized approach is important for several reasons. First, improvement in performance has to be based on the individual needs of the learner. While it is evident from the experience in Missouri and other states that there needs to be a consistent base of information and competencies that is provided to all instructors, it is equally true that in continuing professional development, individualized learning and performance needs must be addressed. The importance of this not only for learning, but as a primary motivator is underscored in a recent study published in Adult Education Quarterly (Livneh and Livneh, 1999). In this study it was found that:

> "Self-Motivated Learning (Factor 1) was the variable with the greatest predictive utility for the amount of time spent in learning activities among educators over the previous 12 months. Participants who were self-motivated, rather than motivated by others, have been involved in self-initiated study and able to learn by themselves, are curious, achievement motivated, able to evaluate their own learning, take action rather than waiting for things to happen, learn in a variety of ways including independently using the library, view themselves as learners, have a positive attitude toward education, are energetic, emphasize organizing their activities, and were interested in reading, were more likely to spend more time in learning activities over the past year."

These qualities are completely consistent with the competencies and characteristics of effective adult educators identified in every one of the focus groups.

The same study notes elsewhere that "there has to be an investment in teacher preparation and continual professional development." Further, it states that:

> "CPE (Continuing Professional Education) can no longer be seen as educators leaving their buildings to attend short workshops or graduate courses. It must evolve to include opportunities for educators to: (a) reflect on their practice and solve problems of practice collaboratively; (b) dialogue with colleagues; (c) develop a school culture that supports collaborative action versus individual development; (d) be based in actual work with students; (e) involve peer observation, coaching and feedback; and (f) be ongoing for the length of their career."

These qualities of professional development activities are also consistent with the types of professional development described by focus group participants. Creating these sorts of professional development opportunities would require programs to allow for instructor-driven, individualized professional development planning, creation of cooperative action learning cells, and provide institutional support for those efforts. With regard to this latter issue, institutional support is here conceived broadly as both funding and management support within the system: providing the necessary freedom of action within

the system to not only develop the learning opportunities, but to make use of the knowledge in the workplace.

We know that the current standards for hiring instructors in adult education programs in Illinois already meets the fundamental requirement that is the essential starting point for credentialing in every state that we have investigated, to wit: that instructors possess at least a Baccalaureate degree. This is a relatively minimal standard, but it recognizes that this is a professional field requiring a base of knowledge of sufficient breadth as to necessitate focused study at an advanced level. Current Illinois standards, for whatever reason, do not address this standard. At a bare minimum, this should change, if for no other reason than that it would make the Illinois standard consistent with the minimums established by other states. It would also, as discussed above, bring the state standards in line with current program practices. Both administrators and instructors interviewed in a study of the use of part-time instructors in adult education programs in Illinois addressed this issue as important to the professional image of the field (Leinicke, 1997). The argument that there are exceptional people who have the capacity to be excellent adult education instructors without a degree is an insufficient argument against the essential principle. In every field, there are those exceptions to the rule. Professional standards, however, cannot be based on the exceptions, but rather on the larger need for the field to set some limitations on entry likely to reasonably enhance the performance of it's practitioners.

K-12 certification, while considered highly desirable by many programs and required by a large number, is not, in and of itself, proof of competence to teach adults. This was stipulated a number of times during the focus groups. While there are a number of identifiable competencies that have been discussed in the process of investigating credentialing, it has been difficult to define a set specifically related to adult education as opposed to good teaching in general. However, there are some, such as the need to recognize and take into account the life circumstances of the students, their prior history with the schools, and an awareness of the social service network that are more particularly related to adult education. It has been made clear that practitioners in adult education recognize that the competencies needed for success in adult education, while overlapping with education in general, are not entirely identical and additional, specific competencies are needed to work successfully with adult populations. As a plan for certification, professional development, or both, is developed, this will need to be recognized and these competencies

explored so that professional preparation activities and continuing education both aim at addressing these unique needs.

The essential idea of credentialing, the creation of a system that would more effectively ensure consistently high quality instruction in adult education programs is fundamentally sound. It ultimately may not matter as a performance issue whether a credential or certificate is attached to it or not. The credential provides a publicly perceived representation of the process. The important fact is that the engagement of instructors in on-going learning activities that develop and enhance their skills produces measurable results in terms of improved student performance. To produce the quality results envisioned by the administrators who contributed to the vision statement in the State Plan requires an enormous investment of effort and resources. There are problems with this. The availability of set-aside money for professional development will soon end as the federal funding structure changes. In the future, program resources will need to be allocated for this purpose, requiring hard choices about the relative value of investments. It will be essential to measure not simply the satisfaction of engaging in a professional development process, but also the improvements in performance that result. To ask of programs that they invest in a process that many do not deem essential to their survival or even regard as inimical to that end is a large request. The field of adult education will not accept easily a change as significant as a credentialing system without the production of some evidence that this is a beneficial move.

It will be incumbent on all of the stakeholders in developing a system of credentialing to keep this in mind and to take the process step by step, with meaningful evaluation at every stage. Certain pieces, such as developing standards and materials for new instructor orientation, will have to be completed before a credentialing process can be initiated. There will need to be initiatives in the area of planning and evaluating professional development for performance improvement, with training opportunities and consultation services available for program administrators and staff. It will be necessary for all of the various organizations working on aspects of professional development to coordinate their efforts in order to create a complete, integrated set of professional development opportunities that can be accessed by instructors from all programs in a cost-effective and convenient manner. This will result in some additional challenges in the short-term, but should pay large benefits in the long-term, with greater accessibility and

program range for the field. Additional resources for professional development will need to be identified and drawn in.

As the initial goals for professional development opportunities are being met, there needs to be an examination of the performance funding to determine how to create a system of performance funding for compliance with credentialing requirements. Such a system will need to be designed in such a way as to enable programs to recover their direct costs for providing professional development as well as some additional incentive funds that can be used for increased staff pay and program development.

Clear standards will need to be established for compliance with credentialing. What level of credentialing is reasonable given the constraints of the system? Is it necessary to have 100% of ABE/GED instructors credentialed or can a program show significant improvement with 75% of it's instructors credentialed? It would appear that there is no compelling reason to demand 100% compliance, but equally, over time, there is no compelling reason not to. With the exception of requiring an orientation and a specific amount of required professional development, the standards for credentialing that have been discussed are highly similar to what is now common practice. Would the imposition of these standards represent an undue burden? These are important questions for the field and input will need to be sought as standards are determined.

There was discussion in the focus groups of the need for phasing in credentialing. There was a high level of concern about the potential impact of the abrupt imposition of credentialing standards. Many seemed to be in favor of some sort of interim process leading to a credentialing requirement. It would seem that a period of five to seven years is not unreasonable in light of these discussions. The Vision for Adult Education formulated by the advisory council used an eight year window for the achievement of the entire program, which included credentialing as a significant piece of the vision. The Missouri system that has been referenced a number of times was developed over a fifteen year period. As noted above, given current turnover rates, 55% of the instructors in the field will have entered the field within a six year period (Leinicke, 1997). Anyone hired within the phase-in window would come in with the minimum education requirements and with an understanding that working in the field requires professional development. For a field committed to life-long learning, this does not seem to be an onerous requirement. The allowance of a

phase-in time and grandfathering those who do not meet newly established degree requirements (a very small number of practitioners) should not disrupt employment unduly.

There is nothing contained in this paper that is inconsistent with other efforts within education to improve performance and gain public support. The ideas and recommendations contained herein are consonant with the ideas presented in the paper by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1996). They are consistent with the standards being laid out for the K-12 system. They are consistent with practices of performance improvement and professional development in the business community. They are also consistent with the description of professional development presented in the Linveh and Linveh (1999) study, which described "continual, integrated, professional development." This professional development was further described in the same study as including "(a) keeping updated with the profession's knowledge and skills; (b) analysis of job functions and preparation for new roles; and (c) consideration of environmental, professional, and personal contexts within which the professional practices." In the long run, adult education has nothing to lose and an enormous amount to gain by instituting a rationally conceived and carefully planned system of credentialing based on ongoing professional development.

The major challenges in instituting a credentialing system are three. First, ensuring that all adult education systems are learning organizations that engage in meaningful, on-going, transfer-centered professional development, and second, providing consistent, accessible opportunities for professional growth for those who invest their time and energies in becoming credentialed. The third is to provide the systems and resources for professional development that will meet the needs of the field and produce ultimately, the improvements in student performance that credentialing is intended to serve. If we are serious about improving adult education in Illinois, we need to meet these challenges.

Delivering Professional Development for Credentialing

Any program leading to certification or credentialing of adult education instructors will have some requirement of on-going staff development. This seemed to emerge as a sense of the population in the focus groups. This also is one of the consistencies of credentialing programs in other states, as well as one of the consistent elements of professional certification in a wide variety of fields, from accountancy to

veterinary medicine. It is worth noting that in the discussion of new certification requirements for K-12 teachers in Illinois, there have been specific references to research indicating a relationship between knowledge and skills of teachers and student performance. This position is also supported by the NFIE (1996) study. In multiple research projects cited in that document, they report clear linkages between teacher learning and student achievement. It is on this basis that there is included in the new legislation on K-12 certification in Illinois, detailed agreements about requirements for individualized professional development plans and activities for maintaining and renewing certification in the K-12 system. In this plan, there is a requirement that all teachers engage in a specified number of hours of professional development activity designed to address identified needs for professional improvement. This is consistent with the discussion of professional development that has been part of this investigation of credentialing. Although the details are presently in adjudication, it is clear that the intent of the new regulations is that each teacher in the K-12 system will have to participate in a set number of professional development activities that have been agreed upon by the employing system and the instructor. It does not seem inconsistent to expect adult educators to maintain a similar standard of professional performance. It is also worth pointing out in the context of this discussion that there are adult education systems within the state that do require their instructors, as part of their basic contractual agreement, to participate in staff development activities and for those activities to be approved by the program. Such requirements, therefore, while they may not be commonplace, are not unheard of, nor are they particularly novel in adult education.

In the case of states with credentialing, the one from which there is clear documentation of performance improvement subsequent to the development of a credentialing program, Missouri, there are several lessons worth remembering. First, the credentialing requirement was the result of a process over time. Each piece of the process was instituted separately and evaluated for its effect on performance. Not all of the pieces that were tried were retained and some of those that were retained were only retained after modification and adjustment. Second, although there is a centralized service center that provides the fundamental training received by all instructors, there is also a requirement that outside consultants be brought in to conduct summer workshops for no more than two consecutive years in order to provide fresh input and allow the field to remain current with practices developing in other areas of the country. Third,

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all materials used in the training activities at every level, from workshop to university courses, are developed with input from experienced practitioners from the field. Fourth and finally, all workshops are offered consistently to all instructors throughout the state. All entering instructors and administrators take the entry level workshop during their first month in the field. The intermediate workshop is required during the second year. All instructors take the summer workshops.

In considering the design of a system and requirements for credentialing for Illinois, a number of issues need to be examined. First among these is quantity of professional development required. The evidence from the field suggest that the threshold needs to be set relatively low in order to minimize the potential damage due to loss of part-time instructors. On the other hand, it would need to be set high enough to actually produce measurable change in practice over time in such a manner as to impact student performance, which is the sine qua non of the whole credentialing movement. Second, there would need to be some phase in or clause for current practitioners so that people who have been working in the field would be protected or held harmless for a period of time. It would seem that this period could be relatively minimal, no more than one to two years for engaging in on-going professional development, with a lifetime waiver in the matter of degrees. For example, if a program had hired a teacher with less than a BA, that person would not be required to go back to school to get a BA, but would be required to engage in the minimum number of professional development activities in order to maintain a credential. A third consideration here is the matter of recording and evaluating professional development activities. Record keeping is a consideration for all programs. The suggestion has been made that professional development data can be added to and tracked through the STAIRS system or other dynamic reporting system. A further suggestion has been made from the field that compliance with professional development activities, whether for credentialing specifically or for program development in the absence of credentialing, could be rewarded with performance funding. In this event, the return on investment would off set the costs of record-keeping, eliminating the major argument related to this area of concern. Evaluation is another and somewhat more complex issue. Evaluation of quality of professional development activities is a problem in any setting and a long-term program of education in effective evaluation methods would need to be conducted in order to enable programs to properly determine whether professional development efforts were successful in meeting the described needs.

Curricular preparation is a somewhat more difficult issue, especially in light of the fact that most adult education programs currently operate under a one-room schoolhouse model. It is nice to advance, as a few did in the focus groups, the argument that teachers need to be knowledgeable in their subject areas. It is another thing altogether to adequately prepare part-time instructors to properly instruct the five subject areas of the GED, plus basic literacy skills, plus workplace education. If indeed subject area expertise is desired, then there is also a need to reexamine the dominant models and consider whether the two are compatible. Prior study in a particular subject area as a criterion for credentialing may make very good sense in a K-12 system or a community college organized by departments where an instructor of English in fact instructs English. It does not make nearly such good sense in an adult education classroom meeting four to six hours a week addressing all of the subjects noted above.

There is no argument here against hiring people with high levels of specific knowledge of a single subject area. Rather, there is a concern here for professional development needs. If one hires, for example, a science specialist, one can expect superior understanding and development in students in the area of science. Without some professional development, however, one cannot expect that instructor's students to show similar advancement in the areas of writing, math, or in employability skills. There are specific needs in those areas that cannot reasonably be addressed without additional training. One of the considerations that arises here is that, with performance based funding, there will be pressure imposed on programs to hire for those skills that most readily translate into performance dollars, i.e., reading and employability skills, ignoring other academic areas in favor of those. While this is not necessarily bad, it does have the effect of altering the nature of the field in an ever-tightening spiral that converges instructional activities in those directions. So, there are two problems to consider: first, the need for generalist instructors, and second, pressure to become less generalized in those directions that lead to increased performance income. The two notions appear to be contradictory. Both circumstances argue for focused on-going professional development that meets each of the needs.

More important to the participants in the focus groups were a number of "soft-skills" and knowledge of adult education theory and philosophy that would be essential elements in professional development for instructors. Much of this information was identified by the focus group participants as entry level knowledge that would be most effectively provided as part of a universal orientation to the field.

Included in this knowledge are such areas as awareness of the lives of adult education students, familiarity with concepts of adult education as opposed to traditional pedagogy models, diversity awareness, knowledge of special learning needs issues, and awareness of community resources. While initial awareness and knowledge of these concepts would be an essential part of instructor orientation, there would also be an on-going need for advanced training and professional growth in all of these areas.

Professional development can be delivered in a vast number of ways. It is important in examining and considering whether to require professional development as an aspect of credentialing to consider how the availability and accessibility of professional development will affect the outcomes of the process. It has been proffered in the focus groups that professional development opportunities need to be widely available and presented in multiple platforms so that any instructor can access programs at the local level. To this end, distance learning, self-contained learning formats (CD-ROM, videotape, etc.), and independent study designs have all been advanced as being essential elements of a comprehensive approach to development issues. Especially with regard to the issue of orientation, which for many programs under the current system is a nearly continuous operation because of high turnover of instructors, this is an absolutely essential consideration.

There are a number of factors that have weight when considering professional development delivery under the existing system of adult education in Illinois. First, we have in Illinois a service center infrastructure that is unique to our state organization. This system has provided professional development support for programs throughout the state for many years. The requirements of credentialing suggest that there might need to be a greater degree of joint planning and overlap of services among the service centers in order to provide an enlarged range of services and more consistent access. There is also justification for a cluster of uniform services that are provided by all of the centers to maximize access opportunities. Additionally, the service center network needs to take a leadership role in exploring and presenting new models of professional development that empower individual instructors and local programs to address specific, identified needs. The centers would be invaluable in providing resources, assisting program staff (both instructors and administrators) in developing professional development plans, conducting evaluations of professional development activities, and planning and delivering workshops based on client-identified needs. The centers would also be instrumental in developing, in cooperation with local programs, distance

learning activities and internet based learning opportunities that would open access to professional development programming for more remote programs and for instructors with limited professional leisure for development activity.

The issue of access is one that came up frequently during the discussion of professional development in the focus groups. The consensus was that any plan for credentialing would have to include some form of professional development requirement. Such a requirement would be utterly unworkable without a system of professional development offerings diverse enough to allow a significantly high degree of open access. This was typically conceived in terms of having a variety of media available for delivery of services. An alternative response to this problem has been developed and tested in the state of Missouri. In that state, mandated summer instructor workshops are given by a team of presenters who conduct the workshops at regional locations that allow instructors to attend with no more than one hour of travelling time in each direction. Workshops are scheduled so that the instructor can travel to and from the workshop within the span of a normal workday. Mileage and per diem are provided by the state department of adult education.

One form of professional development that received attention from the focus group respondents is mentoring and observational learning. Team teaching, formal and informal mentoring programs, master teacher structures and similar forms of social learning were identified as being of exceptional value, particularly for novice instructors. In the state of Michigan, the assignment of mentors to work with new instructors is mandated. All new hires in adult education, as in the K-12 system, are assigned a mentor for the first two weeks and are required to work with that mentor during that period. Such models should not be overlooked when considering appropriate learning activities for credentialing purposes. Indeed, considering the importance attached to these forms of professional development by all of the focus groups and the need-responsive nature of this type of learning, it would be a oversight to exclude it from a credentialing plan.

Another approach to both pre-service and in-service professional development, but one less often mentioned in the focus groups, is formal academic coursework in adult education, particularly at the undergraduate level. In states where this has been utilized and there is evidence of performance improvement, such as Missouri, one of the important considerations here is that the curriculum has been

developed through a partnership of state service providers, field practitioners, and higher education systems. This has resulted in a consistent, field-validated curriculum that addresses classroom performance needs. A similar process of development of core curriculum that could be offered through the various state universities should be considered in Illinois. Based upon the experiences of other states, as well as the comments of focus group participants as to the importance of relevant content, what should be avoided is the institution of university courses purporting to prepare practitioners to be adult education instructors without appropriate input regarding content from all stakeholders in the field.

One issue that is pervasive in the discussion of professional development is that everything that is available outside of the local system must be made readily accessible. All of the potential power of distance and technologically supported learning will need to be brought to bear, particularly in the area of orientation. What needs to be available in multi-format delivery systems is that body of information that meets two basic criterion: first, that it is relatively stable and likely to remain so over a period of time, and second, that there is broad agreement as to the essential nature of the information. There may be extensive debate as to what information meets these criteria, but the expense of production of materials on a large scale and on multiple presentation platforms requires attention to these issues.

It is also important to recognize that there are untapped resources for professional development that we can use that are often presently overlooked. We are being asked, for instance, to focus on job and workplace skills that are often unfamiliar to classroom instructors with an academic background. This suggests that there may be opportunities for partnering with both public and private organizations that have expertise in workforce development and workplace skills. In every program region throughout the state there are business and community linkages available that can provide professional development opportunities that can be use to grow the skills of instructors and help them better serve students. Such learning activities would clearly be within the realm of professional development for credentialing in adult education.

It is also important to consider, as has been mentioned earlier, the need for transfer of training to the classroom. It is not sufficient to simply send instructors to training for a credential. That credential must have meaning and it must have impact on the performance of the program and the clients. If it does not change performance in a positive way, then credentialing is a meaningless exercise with no value for

adult education. This seemed to be one of the major concerns throughout the focus group process. There is no absolute guarantee, of course, that any training activity will have any lasting effect on performance. However, to the extent that the systems are aware of the need to support and evaluate training, make it clear that the training is important and that performance improvement is important to the system, there is a higher likelihood of transfer occurring. It is also essential that the instructors themselves have a clear understanding of what they are trying to accomplish. This means that goals for learning and improvement need to be clearly established by both the system and the instructor. Learning activities need to be designed that are consistent with the developmental needs of the individual instructor. Programs need to be planned that offer true opportunities to develop skills, not merely be excited about an idea.

Consistency with other research and literature on credentialing

In closing this paper and making recommendations with regard to the parameters for a credentialing system for Illinois Adult Educators, it is important to note that the findings of the focus groups with regard to credentialing issues are consistent with other investigations of adult education as well as with the experience of other states contacted in connection with this study. In a study of part-time instructors conducted in 1995 and 1996, Leinicke (1997) found highly similar descriptions of instructor competencies as well as often identical descriptions of preferred approaches to professional development and virtually identical descriptions of the potential effects of credentialing on the field. In that research, the population included in the study were administrators and instructors in Illinois Adult Basic Education and GED programs. Further, the literature on professional development from the K-12 system, from adult education journals, and from the business and industry sector of adult education is highly consistent in describing the need to focus on individual professional development planning that is aligned with the needs of the organization, controlled by the learner, and cognizant of the needs of the system within which the development effort is taking place. (See for example, the professional development website http://knowledgeloom.org/ sponsored by Brown University, the Livneh and Livneh (1999) article in Adult Education Quarterly cited above, or Zenger, Ulrich, and Smallwood, The New Leadership Development, Training and Development, March 2000). There is also unanimity on the need to focus on performance change and growth as opposed to simply knowledge acquisition. Professional development is consistently described in the literature in much the same terms used by the participants in the focus groups, as an

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ongoing process, rooted in practice and application. The recommendations that follow are made with that end in mind. They propose a system of credentialing that is consistent with the experience of other states, adapted to the existing system and needs in Illinois, and aligned with a philosophy of professional development that is rooted in the improvement of the practice of each practitioner and of the field as a whole.

Recommended parameters of a credentialing system.

1. Minimal requirement for working in the field should be attainment of no less than a Baccalaureate degree. There should be no requirement as to area of study. K-12 certification requirement should be a local option at the program level.
2. Prior to entering the classroom any new instructor would be required to complete an orientation program including at a minimum an overview of adult learning theory and practice. an orientation to adult student populations and their needs, an overview of the essential content to be taught and the teaching resources available to the system, an overview of the social service network and partnership agencies that provide services in common to the adult education service population, an overview of the State of Illinois Common Performance Management System and the purposes thereof, including its relationship to the field of adult education, and any specific considerations of the local program, such as funding and paperwork requirements. The specifics of content should be determined by a panel consisting of university personnel familiar with adult education issues, representatives from each of the four adult education service centers, program administrators and instructors with experience in each of the sub-areas of adult education instruction, such as ABE, GED, and ESL, and representatives of the Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators' Association.
3. There should be a standard requirement of professional development activity. A plan for such development should be created during the first semester of employment. Such a plan should include at least one project or activity per semester addressing a need identified and goals for improvement established by the instructor and approved by the program's designated supervisor, whether nominal director, coordinator, lead teacher or other such person. At least one activity in every two years should be an activity requiring cooperative interaction with another instructor or instructors working toward a common improvement goal. Within the delivery system for such professional development, there would need to be options for delivery including distance learning and technology approaches, options for self-directed learning, and teaming opportunities provided at the local level. There is no good reason why such professional development activities should not be piggy-backed with development activities meeting certification update standards in the K-12 system, so long as some aspect of the

activity was clearly connected and shown to be relevant to adult education as well. This would allow those instructors teaching in both adult education and the K-12 system to combine activities and not impose an undue burden on those who are full-time in K-12 and part-time in adult education. Services would need to be provided on multiple platforms so that any instructor could obtain access to at least the majority of professional development opportunities. Service Center offerings would need to be made available on a state-wide, rather than just a regional basis.

4. Professional development activities for purposes of credentialing would need to be recorded using a standard plan, addressing a plan of study, desired outcomes and standards for evaluation of outcomes. Plans should ideally address issues of measurable practice and transfer of learning from the training activities to classroom practice. Evaluation of the activity should be conducted at several points and at multiple levels, both during and following the professional development activities.
5. Participation in professional development as a criterion for credentialing should be rewarded both at the level of the individual instructor, by way of a pay differential for credentialed instructors, increased teaching assignments or other inducements as may seem expedient to the local programs, and at the program level, through a line of performance funding for programs whose credentialed staff meets or exceeds a specified level, such as 75%. There could be established a set of levels of credentialing compliance, with each successive level receiving additional moneys up to 100% compliance.
6. Provision for recording professional development compliance should be made in the STAIRS database or other dynamic record-keeping system as may be developed for purposes of maintaining data for funding.
7. Development of a credentialing program should be done in stages, with early concentration on the development of professional development options through the service center network and with local programs and practitioners. This development process should also involve the professional association for adult educators (IACEA), the publishing establishment for adult education, the university system in the State of Illinois, and professional development practitioners from outside the education arena. An essential consideration here would be the development of multiple program platforms and the definition and delineation of essential content, particularly in the area of best practices and essential theory for an orientation program. **Pilot demonstration and research projects investigating the**

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effectiveness of credentialing activities should be undertaken and carefully evaluated. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation of student outcomes would need to be undertaken, utilizing both STAIRS data and data specifically gathered as part of a systematic research effort regarding the impact of credentialing. This latter research effort would need to examine both the effects of credentialing on student performance and the impact on programs in such areas as retention of instructors, instructor satisfaction, increases in baseline costs, and return on investment.

8. A hold-harmless provision would need to be made to allow all current instructors in adult education to remain in the field. A phase-in of professional development requirements would allow instructors to gradually increase their level of professional development activities. Further, it would not be necessary to require all programs to hire all credentialed staff, particularly at the outset. A requirement such as "by the third year all programs will have no less than 40% of their staff in compliance with the credentialing standards" with higher compliance levels linked to performance funding should be sufficient to encourage programs to move in the direction of compliance with credentialing. A window of perhaps five to seven years for a compliance standard, say 70% of instructional staff would allow for a staged transition. At present turnover rates, by the end of a seven year window, over 60% of the practitioners in the field would have been hired under the credentialing standards, so that this should not present an exceptional standard to meet.
9. It is further recommended that this paper be disseminated to programs and interested agencies and that public hearings be used to gather further information that might be useful in the design of pilot projects of credentialing activities.

Recommended Next Steps

1. Public input on the issues presented in the white paper should be sought. A series of hearings should be held at the direction of the committee at such locations as seem appropriate.
2. An advisory group shall be established to work, under direction of the Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center, to develop a plan for the gradual institution of credentialing. This group should include representatives from the Illinois Adult Education Service Centers, representatives from state universities involved in teacher education and adult education degree programs, instructors

and administrators from adult education programs, the Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators Association, along with any other groups or agencies identified by the Credentialing Committee.

3. The Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center staff will begin contacting other states and obtaining copies of materials used by those states in New Teacher Orientation and Credentialing programs. These materials will be assembled in a resource library at the Partnership Center for use by an advisory team to be established by the Credentialing Committee in developing a pilot program for Teacher Orientation as a first step in development of a credentialing system.

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